VZCZCXRO7293
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2505/01 2231202
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 101202Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8749
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002505

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2018
TAGS: PGOV IR
SUBJECT: SURVEY OF SOUTHERN POLITICAL ENTITIES

REF: A. HILLAH 00062
     ¶B. BAGHDAD O/I 7/8/08
     ¶C. BAGHDAD 2270
     ¶D. BAGHDAD 2124
     ¶E. BAGHDAD 0458
     ¶F. BAGHDAD 0699

Classified By: Classified by Acting Deputy Political Counselor John Fox
 for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a joint Baghdad - PRT - REO reporting cable.

¶2. (C) Summary: 229 political entities (individual
candidates and parties) registered in the southern provinces
for the upcoming provincial elections. The number and
composition of the entities is another manifestation of
widespread dissatisfaction with the religious parties
currently in power - over half of the parties use the word
'independent' in their name, and many of the individual
candidates advertise themselves as technocrats - doctors,
engineers, teachers and scientists. Even the parties
themselves are often closely associated with a single,
locally popular figure, and candidates will likely compete as
much on personal reputation as political platforms. Although
the Sadr Trend is not participating in the elections,
Sadrist-affiliated parties and candidates are also registered
in many, but not all, provinces. End Summary.

Overview

¶3. (C) Overall, 112 parties and 117 individuals in southern
provinces registered to compete in the provincial elections,
representing 46 percent of registered political entities
nationwide and 67 percent of registered provincial entities.
Numerous contacts in the south have described widespread
disenchantment with 'the parties' (hizb / ahzaab - referring
to the Islamic parties that came into power in the 2005
elections) and emphasized the importance of electing
independent groups. The list of registered entities reflects
these sentiments; only four candidates and 26 parties
competed under the same name in the 2005 elections, and over
half (57) of the party names contain some variant of the word
'independent.' Only three - Hizbollah in Maysan, Hizb Da'wa
Tanzim in Basrah, and the national Iraqi Da'wa Party -
contain the word 'party' itself. Of the individual
candidates, only one - Anam al-Sulahi from Basrah - is a
woman.

Babil

¶4. (C) Former Babil governor Iskander Witwit enjoys some
tribal support in the north of the governorate but was
previously forced from office by the rival Sayyid Rasul
faction and has a mixed public reputation. The Qais
al-Mamuri list, named after the assassinated Babil IP Chief,
has received a good amount of publicity. However, Qais'
burial site was recently vandalized, and there are concerns
that attacks will continue against the family and candidates.
 The Independent Iraqi Democratic Assembly for Freedom and

Construction is compromised of former Baathists and is led by Sayid Aziz al-Hussayni, one of three Iraqis originally asked by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to be Babil's governor. Finally, four entities participated in the 2005 elections and received significant public support: The Powerful, Trustworthy Independent Bloc; Our Family; The Independent National Union; and the Independent Partisans Bloc. While the religious parties are courting tribal leaders throughout the province (ref A) others are hiding behind the auspices of an 'independent' slate. The Independent Cadre and Teachers Union, for example, is reportedly an ISCI/Badr front that is courting teachers and school-aged voters in and around the province.

Basrah

¶5. (C) The Justice and Unity Assembly is a coalition formed from local intellectuals, technocrats, and tribal leaders (ref B). The United Arab Emirates are supporting the Free Democratic Iraq Assembly; although Sheikh Muzahim Kan'an al-Tamimei runs the party his nephew, Mohammad al-Kan'an, is registered as the party head. Mohammed's father worked for Iranian and Iraqi intelligence and was executed by Saddam. The Revolutionaries of the Shabaniyah Uprising Movement is connected to the local OMS and led by Adil Abdel Sayid, a moderate Sadrist. The Union of Political Prisoners in the Center and the South is led by Sitar al-Imarah, who claims to be independent but has ties to ISCI. The Independent Organization for Social Justice and Development is registered under Sheikh Rashash al-Imarah but is led by Tawfiq al-'Abadi, who lacked the degree necessary to register.

Tawfiq is related to former governor and local head of the Badr Corps, Hasan al-'Abadi, and is alleged to receive support from ISCI, Badr, and Kuwait. Local contacts also claim that several candidates, including Sabah al-Bazuni, Adil Rahma, and Musa al-Halfi, are true independents, although the extent of their popular support is unknown.

Dhi Qar

¶6. (C) The Sheikhs' Council of Southern Tribes is led by Sheikh Ali Munshid, an ally of the Governor and a supporter of U.S. and Coalition efforts. On July 16, 900 sheikhs gathered under the auspices of the council and a Muthanna-based tribal movement, the Assembly of the Middle Euphrates, to denounce religious parties and the delays in holding provincial elections (ref C). The Independent List for Justice and Development is led by former Dhi Qar governor Sheikh Sabri; according to unconfirmed allegations he signed a pact with OMS to gain support. Abdul Hussein al-Dukhali heads an organization for victims of persecution by the Saddam regime and has ties to Da'wa. Freedom of Independent Shatra is led by the head of the Shatra City Council who in the past was affiliated with JAM/OMS, and allegedly still receives support from moderate JAM/OMS members. Solidarity in Iraq is the party of Mohammed Mehdi al-Baqir and the local front for Sharistani's national party. The Sons of Rifa'i are a tribal-affiliated group with alleged ties to ISCI. Engineer 'Abd-ul-Khaliq al-Khafaji is a relative of Sheikh Amr al-Khafaji, an influential sheikh from the corner of Garraf area in northern Dhi Qar, and of Aws al-Khafaji, a known JAM commander, but the extent of his links to either is unknown.

Karbala

¶7. (C) The National Gathering for Iraqi Tribes in Holy Karbala is led by Sheikh Abass Alwan al-Hussein Aziz. In June provincial Da'wa leaders, including Governor Aqeel al-Khazali, agreed to run with the gathering on a unified slate in Karbala (ref D).

Maysan

¶8. (C) Abilities of Maysan is a led by Zaid al-Hoshi, a
close aide to the Sadrist governor who may also have ties to
VP Abdel Mehdi. DG of Municipalities Ali Atwan is also
affiliated with the Sadrists and running as an independent
candidate. Perennial Maysani political figure Karim Mahud
al-Muhammadawi (aka Abu Khatim or 'The Prince of the Marshes'
- ref E) has again registered his Hizbollah in Iraq party.

Muthanna

¶9. (C) Najim Abed Sayah (aka Abu Chefat), founder of the
Sons of the Two Euphrates, is a prominent Albu Hassan sheikh
with connections to other Sunni and Shia tribes. Mohammed
Fawaz Jabar al-Zayadi drove a bus in San Diego from 1993-2003
as a refugee before returning to Iraq with the Department of
Defense. He made millions skimming contracts with the
Japanese government and is recruiting progressive young
sheikhs for a campaign focusing on development and tourism.
Governor Ahmed Marzouk is running as head of The Public and
enjoys considerable financial and political backing. The
aforementioned Mid-Euphrates Assembly is led by PC Member
Hakim Khasan, a former member of the Iraqi Opposition
Conference who is rumored to suffer from schizophrenia.

Najaf

¶10. (C) The Independent Reform Assembly is led by Raad
al-Haris and enjoys the financial support of his brother,
Deputy Minister of Electricity Saad al-Haris. The 1991
Uprising Trend for Shabaniyah People is chaired by Aboud
Ghanim, locally well-known for his participation in the 1991
Intifada against Saddam's government. The Hamidi Assembly
for Independents is a front for the Najaf Sahwa and its
chair, Adnan al-Hamidi, enjoys close ties with Sheikh Abu
Risha. He was arrested and subsequently released by the
provincial government due to his efforts to organize the
Najaf tribes. The Independent Assembly is led by Najaf PC
Chair Abdul Hussein al-Mousawi and includes famous Najafi
academics and intelligentsia. Fulfillment to Najaf is headed
by Iraqi intelligence official and former Najaf governor
Adnan al-Zurfi, a pro-American politician who fought against
the Sadrists and is vehemently anti-ISCI. Sadr al-Iraq is
led by Sadrist MP Haidar Fakharaldeen, while candidate Sayyid
Huseein al-Mousawi is also affiliated with the Sadr Trend.
Finally, Isam al-Sayyid Nour al-Yassiri is the son of Nour

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al-Yasiri, famous for his resistance to the British in 1920,
and is affiliated with ISCI and is popular in many rural
areas.

Wasit

¶11. (C) Mohammed Eidan al-Waeli is the mayor of Numaniyah
and likely a passive supporter of JAM elements. Oday
al-Ghawari is the son of the Wasit representative to
Ayatollah Sistani. The Independent Assembly for Sheikhs in
Wasit is led by Sheikh Tagwaha, acting DG of Education prior
to the establishment of the CPA. The Wasitoun Assembly was
founded by Shi'a endowment head Fawzi al-Bakiri and has a
technocratic focus (ref F). The Yasiri House is the party of
PC member Hadi al Yasiri.

Comment

¶12. (C) Tribal leaders, technocrats, and independents are
all political alternatives to the religious parties currently
in power and are represented to varying degrees in every

southern province. Despite the wide array of opposition
figures, it remains unclear how many of these fledging
independent candidates will be able to compete against the
party machinery of the status quo and retain their autonomy
against attempts from religious parties to hijack their image
and message. Ultimately, the most competitive entities may
well be coalitions formed from tribal and technocratic
candidates that combine rural popularity with professional
acumen. End Comment.
CROCKER